



**For Immediate Release:**

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## **It's Time for Your Flu Vaccine LA County!**

Free Flu Shots and FluMist® vaccine nasal spray will be available beginning the week of October 20 at LA County Public Health Outreach Clinics

LOS ANGELES – Los Angeles County Health Officer Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, would like to remind everyone that a yearly flu vaccine is the most important step in protecting against influenza. Flu vaccination is the best way for people to protect themselves and the ones they care about from influenza.

“Beginning the week of October 20, Public Health will be hosting a number of free flu vaccine clinics at schools, churches, and other community sites. We encourage everyone who wants a flu vaccine to get one,” said Dr. Fielding. “The time to get a flu vaccine begins in October and extends into March because we sometimes see flu cases as late as May.”

The flu vaccine clinic schedule and the listing of LA County Public Health Center locations and hours of operation can be found on the Public Health Web site at:

[www.publichealth.lacounty.gov](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov). People who do not have access to the Internet can call the LA County information and referral line by dialing 2-1-1 from any landline or cell phone. Operators can assist people in locating a flu vaccine clinic or a Public Health Center near them.

Parents should know that recommendations for flu vaccinations have recently changed. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all children six months through 18 years of age receive a flu vaccine against influenza every year, unless they have a serious egg allergy. In addition to children, the flu shot is approved for healthy people and people with weakened immune systems caused by HIV/AIDS, cancer or other conditions. The FluMist® vaccine nasal spray is approved for use in healthy people 2 - 49 years of age and women who are not pregnant.

“When people – especially school-aged children – receive a flu vaccine, they not only protect themselves, they also protect people around them who are susceptible to getting sick. Flu can easily spread from child-to-child in school settings,” said Dr. Fielding. “For parents who prefer this option, the County will have thimerosal-free (preservative-free) flu vaccines available.”

Influenza, more commonly known as the flu, causes approximately 36,000 deaths and more than 200,000 hospitalizations each year in the United States. Influenza is a serious and highly contagious illness that is rapidly spread from person-to-person through uncovered coughs and sneezes. The virus may also be spread by touching an infected object or another person’s hand with the flu virus on it and then touching one’s mouth, nose or eyes. People infected with flu can spread the virus to others one day before symptoms appear, and up to five days after showing signs of illness.

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“The best way to prevent the spread of flu is to wash your hands often, especially after visiting the restroom, or coming into contact with someone who has flu-like symptoms; cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze; avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes; stay home if you are sick or keep your children out of school if they are sick; and get vaccinated against the flu,” added Dr. Fielding.

**Symptoms of flu include:**

- Fever
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than in adults)

**People who should not receive a flu shot without first consulting a doctor include:**

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who experienced a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine.
- Children less than 6 months of age (flu vaccine is not approved for this age group), and
- People who have a moderate-to-severe illness with a fever (they should wait until they recover before receiving an influenza vaccination.)

**People who should not receive the FluMist® vaccine nasal spray without first consulting a doctor include (they may still be able to receive a flu shot):**

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- Children under 24 months of age (the vaccine nasal spray is not approved for children younger than 24 months of age).
- Adults 50 years of age and older.
- Pregnant women.
- People with a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS).
- People with severe asthma or active wheezing, chronic health conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease, or weakened immune systems caused by HIV/AIDS, cancer or other conditions.

Different side effects can be associated with the flu shot and the vaccine nasal spray. The viruses in the flu shot are inactive (killed), so you cannot get the flu from the flu shot. Some minor side effects could occur and usually last only 1 to 2 days. These include:

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given.
- Low-grade fever.
- Aches or pain.

The viruses in the vaccine nasal spray are weakened and do not cause severe symptoms often associated with flu illness. In children, side effects can include runny nose, wheezing, headache, vomiting, muscle aches, or fever. In adults, side effects can include runny nose, headache, sore throat, or cough.



# Public Health News

For information regarding the County's schedule of flu vaccine clinics, please visit [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov), or call the LA County Information and Referral Line by dialing from any land or cell phone 2-1-1.

Many pharmacies are also administering the flu vaccine. For these and other locations, please visit [www.findaflushot.com](http://www.findaflushot.com).

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>.

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